

# Grand County

## Local Planning Summary

*Prepared for the:*  
**Dixie, Fishlake & Manti-La Sal National Forests  
Forest Plan Revision  
Social and Economic Assessment**



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***GRAND COUNTY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE, 2003***  
**&**  
***GRAND COUNTY LAND USE CODE, 2003***

<p><b>Summary &amp; Key Issues</b></p>	<p>The intent behind these documents is to provide an update to the Plan adopted in 1996. The County implemented zoning to protect agriculture / grazing uses, and watershed areas. The County recognizes, and seeks to promote more careful management of public lands and maintenance of unincorporated areas. The importance of “rural character” to Grand County residents can hardly be over-stated. The County recognizes the importance of preserving access to public lands as a benefit to both residents and recreational users. Public lands are also an important economic resource for mineral and oil exploration. The County supports these activities provided they do not cause un-do or excessive harm to the natural environment. The County has identified tourism, higher education, and improved health care options as their focus for greater economic diversity.</p>
<p><b>Historical Abstract</b></p>	<p>The Grand County General Plan Update and County Land Use Code of 2003 are intended to respond to the growth seen since the General Plan that was initially adopted in August 1996. This review will focus on those issues that have changed from the 1996 version.</p>
<p><b>Economic Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Grand County School District is the largest employer in the County. Grand County, City Market, and the National Park Service are also among the major employers”, (p.7).</li> <li>• Grand County’s economic base has undergone fundamental change since 1980 ... the minerals industry ... which directly and indirectly generated more than 62% of all income received by county residents in 1980, has now fallen to 2%”, (p.8).</li> <li>• “Tourism was a comparatively minor part of the local economy in 1980, directly and indirectly providing about 11% of all income received by Grand County residents and now some 45% of all residents earn their living in tourism-related jobs”, (p.33).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Environmental Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County has established “Watershed Protection” and “Range and Grazing” districts, (zone p.45, 47).</li> <li>• “There is a wildfire hazard on some private lands in the La Sal Mountains and their foothills, including the second home development in Willow Basin. No fire department serves these areas, and wildfire suppression there is the responsibility of Grand County”, (p.27).</li> <li>• Grand County recognizes that allowing open, cross-country travel by motorized vehicles is no longer an appropriate public land management practice. The County therefore encourages the agencies to reclassify most areas currently classified as “open to motorized travel” to a more restrictive travel designation such as “motorized travel limited to designated roads and trails.” (p.51).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social &amp; Cultural Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County has established a “Agriculture-PUD” district with the intent to accommodate and protect agricultural production, and agriculture-related uses and clustered residential uses, (zone p.42). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “To maintain this way of life, Grand County intends to protect agricultural operators from unnecessary, intrusive complaints and litigation...Agriculture, as a way of life, benefits all residents of Grand County. It is an important part of the economy and adds intrinsic value to life in Grand County”, (zone p.42).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “The importance of “rural character” to Grand County residents can hardly be over-stated”, (p.41).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Lands Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Persons requiring search-and-rescue are billed for the service, but the collection rate is only about 50%”, (p.25).</li> <li>• [From the Vision Statement] “Grand County is known for its rural environment and the ease of access to high quality open space – preservation of these characteristics is a priority”, (p.42).</li> <li>• [Policy Statement 4.2.6] “Promote Management of Public Lands for the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People of Grand County and the Nation”, (p.49). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Grand County encourages the expeditious processing of use permits for economic uses of public lands consistent with the policies of this Plan.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “Grand County continues to support the recommendation for wilderness adopted by the Grand County Council in 1995 after extensive public hearings in which all interests were represented”, (p.53).</li> </ul>

**Regional Demographic Issues**

- The 1996 Plan predicted a 4-5% population growth rate, but the actual was significantly less, (p.3).
- “The number of [law enforcement] incidents has been growing at a rate [that is] faster than the rate of population growth ... crimes against property are most common ... [it is estimated] that 60% of the department’s case load is generated by residents and 40% by tourists and other transients”, (p.24).

**GRAND COUNTY GENERAL PLAN, 1996**

**Summary & Key Issues**

Very little of the County land is actually controlled locally. There is a concerted effort to influence decisions made by Federal, State, and Tribal lands. Mineral extraction industries have declined while tourism has increased significantly. The City of Moab is profiting from, and struggling with, the growth of the tourism market, and County residents are interested in preserving agriculture.

**Historical Abstract**

“Grand County has long had a history of economic and population booms and sometimes a following bust. The first was caused by reports of gold in the La Sal Mountains in the 1890’s. After this were booms caused by fruit growing (1910’s), oil (1920’s), and uranium (1950’s). ... The latest boom... could have a much longer life. The County is in the midst of a tourism boom.” - *excerpt from Utah Labor Market Report, August 1995*

**Economic Values**

- More than 1million visitors annually (in mid-90’s) to Arches and Canyonlands (rate expected to steadily increase ~3.5% (GOPB)), (p.3).
- Retirement and tourism are replacing mineral extraction as the principal industry, (p.16 & 18).
- Economic Action Plan intended to foster a year-round economy, (p.36 & Appendix F).
- Formal policy to preserve agriculture industry, (p.34).

<p><b>Environmental Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average annual precipitation at Moab is 8.18". Irrigation is required for crop production, but available streamflow and storage support the irrigation of less than 1,000 acres, (p.11).</li> <li>• Domestic water needs of Moab may impact irrigation capacity, (p.11).</li> <li>• Interested citizens should create a land trust to acquire sensitive lands when available, (p.32).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social &amp; Cultural Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County residents are interested in preserving agricultural atmosphere, (p.34).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tribal-Specific Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uintah-Ouray Indian Reservation = 200,275 acres (as of 1995), (p.26).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Forest-Specific Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific mention of Forest Service planning requirements and responsibility to consider local planning efforts, (Appendix E-2).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Lands Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 94% of County's total land area is managed by state and federal entities, (p.7).</li> <li>• Most available land (expected to develop privately) is in Spanish Valley, (p.9).</li> <li>• Formal policy to promote intergovernmental coordination, (p.27-31). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BLM and State Trust lands have been designated as potentially available for sale or trade. County should consider these as available for private development, and will initiate a joint planning process with responsible agency, (p.27).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Regional Demographic Issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced rapid growth in early 1990s, (p.3).</li> <li>• Higher-than-average high school dropout and teenage pregnancy rates, (p.19).</li> </ul>

**GRAND WATER & SEWER SERVICE AGENCY  
WATER MANAGEMENT and CONSERVATION PLAN, 1999**

<p><b>Summary &amp; Key Issues</b></p>	<p>The Grand Water &amp; Sewer Service Agency administers three water and sewer districts. Water systems in the County serve residential or agricultural users. The residential system has experienced, and is planning for a 6% growth rate, while the agricultural will not change. The Agency is considering conservation pricing for residential, but not agricultural.</p>
<p><b>Historical Abstract</b></p>	<p>The Grand Water &amp; Sewer Service Agency (GW&amp;SSA) administers Grand County Water Conservancy District, Grand County Special Service Water District, and Spanish Valley Water &amp; Sewer Improvement District. This Plan constitutes the water conservation plan for those entities, and is updated every five years. The Agency holds and administers a number of water rights.</p>
<p><b>Economic Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For planning purposes, an annual drinking water distribution system growth rate is 6% (based on historical growth), (p.2).             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Growth on the irrigation water delivery system has been and will continue to be virtually nil. All water developed through the Mill Creek Project has been allocated, and there is very little opportunity to develop significant additional water, (p.3).</li> <li>○ Drought years require pumping to supplement the irrigation system.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Agency will encourage residential conservation pricing, but no attempt will be made to conserve agricultural water below the 5 AF/ac rate, (p.6).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual precipitation is usually about 8", and little of the precipitation that falls on the (Spanish) Valley enters the groundwater system, (p.1).             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The main contributor to ground water and surface streams is snowfall in the Manti-La Sal Mountains.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

***MOAB AREA TRAVEL COUNCIL    MARKETING PLAN, 2003***

**Summary &  
Key Issues**

The Moab Area Travel Council seeks to improve the local economy by promoting and supporting recreation, tourism and conventions in an environmentally sensitive manner. One of the five objectives of their Marketing Plan is “to increase the level of local and visitor awareness of the importance of maintaining the quality of the environment and encourage responsible use”.